

Emile de Girardin, the father of the modern French press, who at the period one has now reached, 1866, was conducting a paper called "La Liberte*," which had little influence in Paris, had made himself responsible, in Louis Philippe's time, for a fresh idea every day — not, it must be said, altogether successfully, for many of the ideas which he enunciated were mere paradoxes. Yillemessant, who owed much to G-irardin, was an equally great believer in novelty; but being less versatile, and suffering, moreover, from a laborious digestion, which consumed much of his time, he did not often have ideas of his own. So he purchased those of others. He had taken a wife while he was yet in his teens, and had two daughters, one married to his musical critic, Jouvin, the other to a M. Bourdin, who attended to some of his business matters, such as advertising and puffery. Bourdin called upon the Paris publishers, and at Hachette's offices he met Zola. The latter, having decided to quit the firm, told Bourdin of an idea he had formed; it was communicated to Villemessant, who at once offered to give Zola a trial.

The matter was very simple, and will even appear trivial to present-day English and American journalists. Under the title of "Books of To-day and To-morrow,"

Zola proposed to contribute a variety of literary gossip to "L'Idve'nement," after the style of the theatrical gossip, already printed by that and other newspapers. Though publishers' puffs appeared here and there, nobody had previously thought of doing for books and writers what many were already doing for plays, operas, actors, and especially actresses. The innovation took Villemessant's fancy; and Zola, quitting Hachette's on January 31, 1866, published his